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THE PURPOSE AND PLAN OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK.

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THOUGH the specific aim of this paper is the discovery of the purpose and structural plan of the gospel of Mark, it will be expedient, as a preliminary to the main question, to consider what evidence we possess, especially in the book itself, concerning the author, and the readers for whom he wrote.

I. THE AUTHOR.

1. *His nationality as it appears in the book itself.*—Clear indications of the nationality of the author are scarce and scarcely decisive. His references to Jewish affairs and to Palestinian localities imply a familiarity with both such as would be most natural in the case of a Palestinian Jew, but would not be impossible to a Gentile, especially a Christian Gentile who had lived in Palestine, or even to one who had obtained his knowledge of these things, along with his knowledge of the life of Jesus, from one who had been a resident of Palestine. In other words, the evidence suggests a Palestinian author or a Palestinian source of the narrative.

Thus the book speaks of Judea, Jerusalem, and the wilderness that was in that vicinity (1:4, 5, 12; 10:32; 11:1; 15:27); of the river Jordan (1:4, 9); of Jericho (10:46); of Bethany (11:1, 12) and the Mount of Olives (11:1; 13:3); of Galilee (1:9, 14, 39; 3:7; 9:30) and the Sea of Galilee (1:16, 28; 3:7; 4:1, 35-41; 5:1, 21; 6:45, 47 ff.; 7:31); of the cities of Galilee, Nazareth (1:9; cf. 12:24 and 6:1), Capernaum (1:21; 2:1; 9:33), implying in the connection that it was on or near the Sea of Galilee (with 1:21 cf. 1:6, and with 2:1 cf. 2:13), but adding no description of its location (cf. Matt.

4: 13 ff.), and Dalmanutha;¹ of the tract of Gennesaret (6: 53), and of the regions adjacent to Judea and Galilee (3: 7, 8; 5: 1,² 20; 7: 24, 31; 8: 27; 9: 2; 10: 1). The author makes occasional incidental reference to the political status and rulers of Judea and Galilee (6: 14;³ 6: 17;⁴ 15: 1 ff.⁵). He refers somewhat frequently to the parties and classes of people among the Jews, as also to Jewish customs and usages, usually without comment or explanation (1: 22, 44; 2: 6, 18, 24; 3: 6, 22; 5: 22, 35; 7: 1-13;⁶ 8: 11, 15, 31; 10: 2 ff., 33; 11: 15, 27; 12: 13 ff., 18, 28, 38-40; 13: 1; 14: 1, 12 ff., 53 ff.; 15: 1, 10, 11, 31, 42, 43. In two passages he uses Aramaic words, in both cases explaining them (7: 11; 15: 34; *cf.* 15: 42, where, though the word is not Aramaic, but a Greek word used in a technical Jewish sense, he explains its meaning). To these positive evidences may be added the negative fact of the almost total absence of quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures,⁷ which suggests

¹The location of Dalmanutha has never been satisfactorily determined. See HASTINGS, *Dict. Bib.*

²*Cf.* note 2 in the paper on "The Purpose and Plan of the Gospel of Matthew," BIBLICAL WORLD, January, 1898, pp. 38 f.

³The designation of Herod Antipas as king is inaccurate, but follows perhaps the popular manner of speech.

⁴According to JOSEPHUS, *Ant.*, xviii, 5, 4, Herodias was the wife, not of Philip, tetrarch of the northeastern provinces, but of his half-brother Herod, who lived and died a private person. Mark's statement must be explained either by supposing that this Herod was also known as Philip (he was the son of a different mother from Philip the tetrarch) or by attributing it to a confusion between Herod the husband of Herodias and his brother Philip, husband of her daughter Salome, who is also referred to in this passage. See HEADLAM in HASTINGS, *Dict. Bib.*, art. "Herod," Vol. I, pp. 358a, 360b.

⁵Concerning this statement of Pilate's custom, see "Purpose and Plan of Matthew," BIBLICAL WORLD, January, 1898, pp. 43 f.; but observe also that Mark's language even less than Matthew's intimates that this was a general custom of the procurators of Judea.

⁶In this passage vss. 3, 4 contain an explanation of Jewish custom, implying, however, not so much a non-Jewish writer as non-Jewish readers. See also 12: 18 and 15: 42.

⁷The only quotation in this gospel made by the evangelist himself is that in 1: 2, 3; the words in the A. V. 15: 28 do not belong to the true text, and all the other quotations of Scripture language occur in his report of the language of others, usually of Jesus. Of these a list of twenty-three, besides forty-four briefer references to the Old Testament, is given in SWETE, *Gospel according to St. Mark*, pp. lxx ff.

either that the writer was not a Jew or that he was writing especially for non-Jewish readers.

2. *The author's relation to the events.*—It has frequently been pointed out that the narrative of this gospel abounds in details of time, place, and circumstances, and the feelings and manner of Jesus and the other persons of the narrative (1:13, 20, 41; 3:5, 9, 19-21; 4:35-41; 5:3-5, etc.). These details, though sometimes explained as the work of the writer's fancy, are more justly regarded as indicating that the writer was an eyewitness of the events or drew his material from those who were such.

3. *His religious position.*—That the writer, whatever his nationality, was a Christian is evident from his first phrase, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God," confirmed by the tone of the whole book. Citation of particular passages is unnecessary.

But none of this evidence suffices to locate the author definitely. We may, then, properly inquire whether there is any outside evidence that will lead us to some more definite conclusion. This brings us to—

4. *The testimony of tradition.*—This is conveyed to us in two ways.

a. The ancient manuscripts of this gospel uniformly bear the title *Κατα Μαρκον*, "According to Mark," or *Ευαγγελιον κατα Μαρκον*, "Gospel according to Mark," or its equivalent.

b. Ancient writers, from Papias on, speak of a gospel of Mark, but almost as constantly represent the apostle Peter as the chief source of his information. Though the earliest of these writers do not by description or quotation definitely identify the book to which they refer with our present second gospel, yet the testimonies constitute a continuous series down to the latter part of the second century, when abundant quotations identify it beyond all question. The following are some of the most ancient of these testimonies:

"And John the presbyter also said this: Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote accurately whatever he remembered, not, however, recording in order the things that were said or done by the Christ. For

neither did he hear the Lord, nor did he follow him ; but afterward, as I said, [he followed] Peter, who adapted his teaching to the need of the occasion, but not as if he were making a systematic arrangement of the words of the Lord. So that Mark did not err at all in writing some things as he remembered them. For he was careful for one thing, not to pass over any of the things that he had heard or to state anything falsely in them." (EUSEBIUS, *H. E.*, iii, 39, quoted from PAPIAS.)

"Matthew indeed published a written gospel also among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul in Rome were preaching the gospel and founding a church. But after the departure of these, Mark the disciple and interpreter of Peter, he also having written the things preached by Peter, transmitted them to us." (EUSEBIUS, *H. E.*, v, 8, quoted from IRENÆUS.)

"So greatly, however, did the light of piety enlighten the minds of Peter's hearers that it was not sufficient to hear but once, or to receive the unwritten teaching of the divine preaching, but with all manner of entreaties they importuned Mark, whose gospel we have, and who was a follower of Peter, that he should leave them in writing a memorial of the teaching which had been orally communicated to them. Nor did they cease their solicitations until they had prevailed with the man, and thus became the cause of that writing which is called the gospel according to Mark. They say also that the apostle [Peter], having learned what had been done, the Spirit having revealed it to him, was pleased with the zeal of the men and authorized the work for use by the churches. This is stated by Clement in the sixth book of his Institutions, and is corroborated by Papias, bishop of Hierapolis." (EUSEBIUS, *H. E.*, ii, 15.)

"Paul therefore had Titus as his interpreter, as also the blessed Peter had Mark, whose gospel was composed Peter narrating and he [Mark] writing." (JEROME, *ad Hedib.*)⁸

Despite the inconsistencies of these statements with one another as to the extent and character of Peter's influence on the gospel, it is entirely evident that the early church both attributed this gospel to Mark and believed that he was in some way indebted for his facts, in part at least, to the apostle Peter. The Mark referred to in the tradition is undoubtedly the John Mark spoken of in the New Testament in Acts 12:12, 25; 13:5, 13; 15:37, 39; Col. 4:10, 11; Philem. 24; 1 Pet. 5:13; 2 Tim. 4:11. From these passages it appears that Mark was a contemporary of Jesus, but probably only to a limited extent an eyewitness of the events of Jesus' life.

⁸ For other testimonies of antiquity see CHARTERIS, *Canonicity*.

These three factors of the evidence—the internal evidence of the book, the testimony of tradition, and the statements of the New Testament concerning Mark—are self-consistent, and, though not amounting to a demonstration, certainly afford reasonable ground for the conclusion that we have in the second gospel a work of John Mark, at different times a companion of Peter and of Paul; a work based in considerable part on the discourses of the apostle Peter to which Mark had listened, and in which Peter had related many things concerning the life of Jesus. It is presumably to Peter that the narrative is indebted for most of those details that suggest an eyewitness. What other sources Mark may have had it is impossible now to determine.⁹

II. THE INTENDED READERS OF THE GOSPEL.

Reference has already been made to the internal indications that the second gospel was intended, not for Jewish readers, but for Gentiles. The almost total absence of quotations from or references to the Old Testament in the words of the evangelist himself, the absence of any special adaptation of the narrative or of the teachings of Jesus to the Jewish need or point of view, such as is so conspicuous in the first gospel, together with the occasional explanation of Jewish customs and modes of thought (7:2, 3; 12:18), and of Aramaic words or Jewish technical terms (3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 15:34, 42²⁰), all suggest that the author has in mind that his book will be read by Gentiles rather than by Jews. This is in turn slightly confirmed by the

⁹The view of BADHAM, *St. Mark's Indebtedness to St. Matthew*, that the picturesque details of Mark's gospel are embellishments added by the evangelist to narratives taken from an older source, and that of WENDT, *Lehre Jesu*, Pt. I, pp. 9-44, especially pp. 10, 36, 41, 43, that the sources of Mark to the number of eight can be discovered by literary analysis, both seem to me wholly improbable.

²⁰*Σαρανὰς* in 1:13, *Βεεζεβοὺλ* in 3:22, *Παββουελ* in 10:51, are left without explanation, the first two probably as being proper names which required no explanation, the latter perhaps as a word sufficiently known, even among non-Jewish Christians, not to require explanation. *Ἀββὰ* in 14:36 is explained by the immediately following *ὁ πατήρ*, though this is perhaps not a mere explanatory addition. Cf. SWETE, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, *ad loc.* On the general subject of Aramaic in the New Testament see KAUTZSCH, *Grammatik des Biblisch-Aramäischen*, pp. 7-12; NEUBAUER, "Dialects Spoken in Palestine," in *Studia Biblica*, I, pp. 39 ff., especially p. 56.

occasional employment of Latin words (*legio*, 5:9; *speculator*, 6:27; *denarius*, 6:37, etc.; *sextarius*, 7:4; *quadrans*, 12:42; *centurio*, 15:39) which do not occur in the other gospels. With this agrees also the incidental testimony of tradition quoted above. Nor is there anything especially improbable in the tradition that Mark wrote at Rome and for Romans. But this can hardly be said to be very strongly confirmed by the occurrence of a few Latin words.

Whether the gospel was intended for Gentile Christians or for non-Christian Gentiles can be determined, if at all, only on the basis of the evidence for the purpose of the book, which is still to be considered.

[To be completed in the next number.]



CHRIST RAISING THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS

—GUSTAV RICHTER